

EDITORIAL

IS THE FOREST ACT BINDING FOR ALL FOREST OWNERS?

Forests are managed according to the management plan and programme of a particular management unit. Management plans and programmes are drawn up on the basis of the Forest Act and the Forest Management Regulations. However, are the regulations of other laws and by-laws obeyed? These include, for example, the Nature Protection Act, the Environment Protection Act, the Act on Forest Reproductive Material, the Hunting Act, the Forest Fire Protection Act, the Water Act, the Act on Roads, the Physical Planning and Building Act, the State Measurement and Land Registry Act, the Act on Sustainable Waste Management, and the Regulation on Remittance of Trees, Marking of the Timber and Forest Row, the Regulation on Forest Fire Protection, the Regulation on Strictly Protected Species, the Regulation on the Collection of Wild Plants, and the Regulation on the Ecological Network.

The management plan is coordinated with the regulations of the Forest Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia. All this is well known to forestry experts and particularly to those from the Forest Planning Department, who prepare and draw up management plans. Still, it is worth while reminding those less knowledgeable of the matter that timber as raw material for further processing is only one of the vast array of forest products. The basic documents used to formulate management plans clearly highlight the role of the forest and its non-market function, as well as the monetary compensation for this function. Yet, this compensation is the bone of contention for the majority of the citizens, who are generally unaware of forest functions. However, writing this reminder-introductory word and asking the question in the title is always prompted by some events from our surroundings that draw our attention.

For several years now, pursuant to the Act on Compensation for and Restitution of Assets Taken under the Yugoslav Communist Regime, some forest areas have been returned to their former owners - in some cases these areas are relatively large. According to the Forest Management Act, in the case of changed ownership relations caused by the restitution of property based on a special Law and in the case of property exceeding 100 ha, it is necessary to revise the management plan. This is done by the company "Croatian Forests" Ltd, which has been entrusted with the management of state-owned forests, and must be approved by the corresponding Ministry through its expert commission. It is expected that the job is also performed by the "new-old" forest owners, because the Forest Act is binding for all forest owners. The forest management departments of "Croatian Forests" Ltd offer their services of formulating management plans to the new-

old forest owners, but in their words, mainly unsuccessfully. We assume that these programmes are executed by some other licensed forestry companies. Hard to believe, but there have been cases of such jobs being entrusted to sawmill owners! Thus, the already familiar "acts of plundering" in private forests are continuing, but now over even larger areas. Trees are being mercilessly cut down, and it is evident that such acts are either approved by someone or that eyes are being shut to this practice. We would not want to incriminate anybody because we are not inspectors, but what we would like to do is, on the basis of indicators, warn the relevant ministry to undertake the required measures, and particularly the Chamber of Forestry and Wood Technology Engineers, to protect the seal of a licensed engineer from possible profanation.

Otherwise, it would be interesting to know in what manner and where the raw wood material from private forests ends and in which processing stage it is found. We know that the majority of raw wood material of Croatian Forests Ltd is "distributed" to buyers at non-market prices, although even the small quantities sold on the market on the public bid principle show a considerable difference in the profit. However, the changes in the selling policy of state forests are a far cry from the desired and more realistic profit. The state - the owner, loses and private pockets of wood processors are filled on the pretext of retaining working places. The news in the press talking of higher prices of raw wood material is just a new administrative, and not a marketing measure.

Several days ago we watched a TV programme on wood processing in Petrinja, and the first conclusion was that "it is the turn of Croatian Forests Ltd" to ensure raw wood material, in the same way it was demanded for similar production in Vukovar, naturally, at "favourable prices". What is this final production? Parquet, which, in the rational use of raw wood material represents a product of sawmill processing and the lowest stage of final timber processing. Veneer is a semi-finished product - raw material for further wood processing. There is no proper finalisation, and it is finalisation that generates the creation of added value and new working posts. Due to our non-market policy we export these instead of wood products in the highest finalising stage. It goes without saying that finalisation stimulates the accompanying industry (frames, glues, varnishes and similar) and ensures specialized training and employment to not only production workers but also wood technology engineers. Why is this so hard to understand?